

# WHITERUTHENIA (BIELARUSSIA)



OUTLINES OF WHITERUTHENIA AND  
THE WHITERUTHENIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT



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### 1. Introduction

To-day the name of "Whiteruthenian" (officially named broadcasting London: "Byelorussian" respectively "Whiterussian Republic" or in Whiteruthenian language-Bielarus) is generally known in international political life, it appears in the press, in diplomatic talks, in the radio etc.

At the conference of San-Francisco as well as at other conferences a special deputy of Soviet Whiteruthenia was present. This representation of Soviet Whiteruthenia as well as the representation of Soviet Ukraine are only political manoeuvres of the Soviet government, for Soviet Whiteruthenia as well as Soviet Ukraine neither carry on their own policy nor can they do so, but have only to execute the commands and orders given by Moscow.

But at this moment another side of this problem is interesting that of Whiteruthenia being a political fact which cannot be overlooked at all in the political life of to-day.

The increase of the political influence of Whiteruthenia is not to be considered as a success of Soviet power, as Soviet propaganda is continually pretending. On the contrary, the appearance of the Whiteruthenian people on the forum of peace as independent political-cultural power is a consequence of the Whiteruthenian movement, which the Bolshevists had always tried to destroy. The fact alone of the existence of a Soviet Whiteruthenian State is to be considered as the receding of the Bolshevists and as an effort to guide the awakened national feeling of the Whiteruthenian people, and to submit it to the influence of its own policy of nationality and economy.



Unfortunately, for historical reasons, the Whiteruthenian people similar to the Ukrainian one was not able to build up (after the First World War) a national state of its own, as it was the case in Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Estonia etc. Therefore the Whiteruthenian problem has been scarcely known abroad, and if it has been, it has always been dealt with by circles hostile to the interests of the Whiteruthenian people.

Now there exists the same situation: The Soviet State speaking in the name of the Whiteruthenian people, although it cannot at all be the speaker and representative of the interests of the Whiteruthenian people.

The Whiteruthenian people has become nationally and politically mature in the fetters of stronger political powers and to-day also shares the fate of many other peoples of the Soviet Union which intends to carry through the experiment of founding the United Communist States, sacrificing millions of people. This attempt contradicts not only all feelings of humanity and the ideas of all civilized peoples of to-day, but also the historically determined development of humanity and society, for it declines to acknowledge the national and economic development of the peoples of Eastern Europe. This attempt shows the intention of building up society according to a plan settled before. In spite of so many fine phrases, the Soviet government, in its endeavour to erect a new communist social order, only succeeded in establishing a piratical state-capitalism, which carries on the same imperialistic policy as the Russian Czars.

It brings about the transition from the international proletariat to the "heroic" Russian people, and at present shows strong panslavistic tendencies. It is for these reasons alone that the Whiteruthenian question should interest him, who would like to occupy himself with Soviet affairs as they are really and who is a friend of the freedom of the peoples enslaved by Soviet power.

As literature in foreign languages is wanting, we feel obliged to deal with some important questions concerning the White-



ruthenian people and its history. Worth mentioning are the following books in foreign languages: The book of Prof. Downar-Zapolski. "The foundation of the Whiteruthenian State" in English, French and German, the book of Dr. Iljaschewitsch "Whiteruthenia and the Whiteruthenians" in Czech language, and the book of E. Engelhardt "Whiteruthenia" in German language. The two former books, which were published already some time ago, are only written for the use of a certain circle of readers, but the latter is to be considered as handbook for Germans.

The aim of this essay is: At first to impart general knowledge about Whiteruthenia and the Whiteruthenians, then to describe the political events in the history of the Whiteruthenian people, and at last to give a picture of the general conditions in which our people is now living.

## 2. Geographical Review

As geographic unit Whiteruthenia comprises the country on both sides of the water-shed between the Baltic and the Black Seas, on the upper course of the rivers Dniepr, Dvina, Niemen, and their tributaries. The exact frontiers are indicated on the enclosed map, but the Whiteruthenian country extends also beyond these frontiers, especially to the North-East and South-East. But beyond these frontiers the Whiteruthenian element is no longer dominating, for there this element has already been very much assimilated.

Within its geographic frontiers Whiteruthenia has a total area of 320 000 square km. with a percentage of the pure Whiteruthenian population of 80 %. At the present time the 2/3 part of this country forms the Whiteruthenian Socialist Soviet Republic. At the beginning of the Second World War (on Sept. 1<sup>st</sup>, 1939) Whiteruthenia, being partitioned among 5 states, was divided into 5 parts, viz:

1. Central Whiteruthenia with the provinces of Minsk (Miensk), Witebsk (Viciebsk), Mogilew (Mahileü), Gomel (Homiel) and Polosk (Palessie) formed part of the Whiteruthenian Socialist Soviet Republic.



2. Eastern Whiteruthenia formed part of the Russian Confederate Soviet Republic, the Districts of Bransk, Sewsk (Sieüsk), Trubceüsk, being parts of the province of Pskow; the districts of Smolensk (Smalensk), Bielsk, Wjasma (Viazma), Darahabuz, Duchnoüscyna, Jelenensk, Parecca, Roslaül, Syceü and Juchnaya being parts of the province of Smolensk, the districts of Mglinsk, Novazubkaü, Staradub, and Suraz being parts of the province of Cernihov.
3. Western Whiteruthenia formed part of the Polish State, comprising the voivodships of Wilna (Vilnia), Navahradak, Polesk (Palessie) and Bielastok with exception of the districts of Lomsha, Ostrolenka, and Ostrowo.
4. Whiteruthenia under Lithuanian government.
5. Whiteruthenia under Latvian government, with the districts of Recyca, Lucyn, and parts of the district of Dvinsk.

In the mentioned area in the whole about 16 millions of people are living, 80% of them are Whiteruthenians, up to the beginning of the Second World War 8% were Jews, 5% Poles, 5% Russians and 2% Lithuanians, Tatars, Germans, and others. The post-war proportion of the national minorities has fundamentally changed, owing to the Jews being almost totally exterminated by the Germans, the repatriation of the Poles, effected by the Soviet government, and the strong immigration of the Russian element from Soviet Russia. At the beginning of the Second World War the Polish element was much predominating in the towns of Western Whiteruthenia and the North-Western districts bordering on the Polish territory.

The official Polish statistics after the last census convey no correct idea of the composition of the population in Western Whiteruthenia, the census in 1931 being carried through with a special tendency under hard pressure of the ruling Polish circles. In this census nearly all Whiteruthenians of Catholic confession were declared to be Poles, in addition a great part of the population having declared itself to be "Tutejschyja" (natives) was reckoned as being of Polish nationality.

Owing to the historical events, part of the Whiteruthenians



belong to the Roman-Catholic church, in Western Whiteruthenia up to 1/2 of the population, whilst the larger part of the Whiteruthenians belong to the Orthodox Church.

The capital of Whiteruthenia is the town of Minsk (or in Whiteruthenian language Miensk.) with 240 000 inhabitants 1940. The historical residence of the Whiteruthenian State was Wilna, which to-day belongs to the Lithuanian Socialist Soviet Republic. The town of Wilna, which had 220 000 inhabitants in 1939 and in which, at the time of the Polish government only about 2000 Lithuanians were living and of the population of which 50 % were Jews, has assumed a Polish character under the Polish Rule, as well as it assumed a Russian character in the Russian period, and as it now has a Lithuanian one. This is a quite clear and characteristic fact for all the big towns of Whiteruthenia, which change their faces according to the ruling power. But the town of Wilna is surrounded by a purely Whiteruthenian landscape.

The same can be said of the town of Bielaŭstok, which is situated most westward in Whiteruthenia. In the West the geographic frontier is formed by the river Narev (Narva) and Bug (Buh). Other big towns of Whiteruthenia are: Smolensk (Smolensk), Mogilew (Mahileŭ), Witebsk (Viciebsk), Grodno (Hrodzien), Pinsk, Gomel (Homiel), Brest (Bierascie), Babrujsk, Bransk.

We find more details about the proportion of the different nationalities in Whiteruthenia on the "Ethnographic map of the Russian Empire", published by Rittich in 1875, on the map of dialects of the Russian language, published in 1885, in the "Polish ethnography", published by the English War Office in 1918.

The statistics of the post-war period were full of mistakes and very uncorrect, moreover they were drawn up a special tendency, so that they must be judged very critically.



### 3. Outlines of Whiteruthenian History

The name of "Whiteruthenia" (Belarus) has become generally known in the last centuries; formerly the country was called Grand-Dukedom of Lithuania, which consisted of Whiteruthenian, Lithuanian, and partly also of Ukrainian countries. The last syllable "rus" had a purely geographic meaning and has nothing in common with the notions of "Russians" and "Russia", as it is frequently explained on the part of the Russians with a distinct tendency, putting historical Russia on a level with imperialistic Russia.

Russia, properly speaking, was not formed before the time of Peter I, and from that time she quickly begins to rise to the position of a great imperialistic power. Under the rule of Peter I Russia was a Moscow principality backward in every respect, appearing much later in history than the other eastern Slavic peoples. Whilst in the Moscow principality cultural and political life had begun only after the overthrow of the Tatarian rule Whiteruthenia was at that time already in the very centre of political and cultural life, and to a certain degree formed a Holy Empire in the East of Europe.

As it is known, the Norman tribe of "Rusy" only gave the impulse to the quick political unification of the eastern Slavic peoples, it was, so to speak, the yeast in the formation of the states among the eastern Slavic peoples. But already before its coming, famous political centres were formed, on account of special historical and geographical conditions, at Kiew, the town of the foundation of the Ukrainian State, and at Polotzk, the cradle of the Whiteruthenian State.

Religious, economic, geographic, and ethic motives caused the grouping of the countries of present Whiteruthenia around these centres, independent from the particularism of the different principalities, characteristic for that time.

Then the countries of the Moscow principality were still a desert, inhabited by peoples of Finnish and Mongolic descent. Only after the decay of Kiew in the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century



there begins the settlement and colonization of these countries, on which later on the power of the Moscovite princes was based and there begins a political expansion, which later on degenerated into the imperialism of the Russian Czars. Thus Rus around Polosk was the very beginning of the foundation of a Whiteruthenia State and of the Whiteruthenian civilization.

When, at the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Teutonic Order, having settled on the coasts of the Baltic Sea, begins to menace the Lithuanian tribes from the West, and Polezk as political centre is weakened, in the western part of the Whiteruthenian countries a new political centre is formed, which assembles around itself not only the former countries of Polozk, but also new countries as well as parts of Lithuania. Soon a strong Grand-Dukedom of Lithuania rises, in which the Whiteruthenians play the leading cultural and political part. For a long time, until about the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, this Grand-Dukedom of Lithuania was the strong hold directed at first against the efforts of expansion of the Moscovite Empire, which grew strong after the overthrow of the Tatarian rule, and later on, after Peter the Great, against those of the newly founded Russian Empire.

Thus the statements of Whiteruthenia forming part of Russia, and the Whiteruthenians forming part or being a tribe of the Russian peoples are nothing but a legend, which was spread by the ambitious Russian imperialists and is now maintained in this or that form (in reality the notion of "Soviet people" is equivalent to the notion of "Russian people").

As we see, the history of the Whiteruthenian people till the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century is closely connected with the history of the other West European peoples, and has nothing in common with Russia, except the continual fights for its own defence.

The Whiteruthenian language was the official language in the Grand-Dukedom of Lithuania, all laws were issued in the Whiteruthenian language. The well known Lithuanian Statute in



the 3 editions of 1529, 1566, and 1588 was issued in Whiteruthenian language.

For those reasons the notion of "Grand-Dukedom of Lithuania" must not be mixed up with the modern notion of "State of Lithuania". The present Lithuania (in its geographic sence) had formerly been called "Zmudz". Up to the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Lithuanian tribes had no character of their own and took only little part in the life of the state.

This coincidence of his topical notions, as is also the case with regard to the syllable "Rus", causes some confusion, but, however it may be, without any doubt the dominating position of the Whiteruthenian element in the cultural and political life of the Grand-Dukedom of Lithuania is decisive.

The pressure of the Germans from one side and that of Moscow from the other urged the peoples, living between these two powers, to unite. By virtue of a dynastic combination even a union between Poland and the Grand-Dukedom of Lithuania had been effected. But immediately after this had happened, the Poles began trying to polonize the Whiteruthenian population. These efforts, which were artificially fostered, were strongly resisted by the Whiteruthenian citizens and the patriotic nobility. For these reasons a complete union and assimilation of Whiteruthenia and Poland, which was the wish of the ruling Polish circle's, was impossible for a long time.

Only in 1697 the Whiteruthenian language was abolished as official language of the Grand-Dukedom of Lithuania. Only by bestowing Polish privileges of nobility and by the conversion to Roman Catholicism, which was fostered by Polish Jesuits, a great part of the higher Whiteruthenian classes had been successfully polonized. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the descendants of the formerly well known Whiteruthenian families of Kiska, Tyskievič, Chadkievic, Sapieha, Karsak, Vatovic, Pac, Chraptovic and others severed themselves from Whiteruthenian nationality and turned Poles.

But still in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Grand-Dukedom of Lithuania went on living its own life and maintained its historical pe-



cularities. The traditions of the national and political peculiarities had not yet died, as the Whiteruthenian people, though forsaken by its intelligence went on living in the old way, maintaining its language and customs, and bequeathing them from generation to generation.

The partition of Poland and Grande-Dukedom of Lithuania in 1772 and the two partitions which followed shortly afterwards, are to be considered as the end of the political independence of Whiteruthenia.

Whilst Poland had succeeded in 1918 in rebuilding its state, the Whiteruthenians have not yet been able to realize their political ideals up to the present day.

Now they have only a kind of government within the Soviet regime, which, being in the hands of the Bolshevists, is to be considered as a means for the assimilation of the Whiteruthenian people and its complete "Sovietization". This fate, which befell the Whiteruthenian people, was only the result of exterior circumstances, especially of the formation of political life in Eastern Europe.

The political failures of the Whiteruthenian people in 1918 are not at all to be attributed to weakness of the Whiteruthenian movement. Whithout any doubt the Ukrainian movement was considerably stronger, and yet, at that time, it had not succeeded in creating an independent Ukraine, whereas the comparatively small States of Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia were able to form States of their own.

The strenght of the Whiteruthenians was at least as great as that of the other peoples, and at the time of the decay of the Russian Czardom the Whiteruthenian people was as ready to defend itself as the others.

The Whiteruthenian people was defeated by the historical events against its own will, so that it passed again under foreign rule, but moreover, this time it was partitioned and subjected to different political, cultural, and economic conditions. In order to understand all these political events in Whiteruthenia, we must first answer the following questions:



How was it possible that the Whiteruthenian people, which passed through a political breakdown after its incorporation into Russia at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, was able to rise again politically and to raise its voice at the moment of the social and national revolution on the Ruins of the Czaristic Russia and to claim like other peoples its national independence? To put it otherwise, first we must deal with origin and the development of the Whiteruthenian national movement.

#### 4. National Rebirth

Influenced by the ideas of the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, French literature, and French life, the Whiteruthenian nobility, after the partition of Poland, could revive the traditions of the Whiteruthenian national traits with special force.

But at first they were only alive among the circles of the intelligence, without touching the broad masses living in economic slavery. But by gradually approaching the people, the intelligence gained a greater influence upon it, which resulted in better understanding, in the improving of education etc. But it was the spiritual movement among the highest circles of the intelligence that was decisive, which is to be regarded as precursor of the new movement and at the same time as support for the following generations.

This tendency chiefly influenced literature.

Already in the rebellion against Russia in 1863 the first beginnings of the young Whiteruthenian movement were perceivable. At the head of the rebellion we see the Whiteruthenian patriot Konstantin Kalinouski, who fought for the independence of Whiteruthenia from Russia and Poland. Kalinouski had chosen the right way in accomplishing his task, for he relied on the peasantry. Therefore the first Whiteruthenian newspaper "Peasantry Truth" (1862—63) was published, which was read by the Whiteruthenian peasants with enthusiasm. But the rebellion was frustrated by the same mistakes as those made in the Polish rebellion, and by the policy of the Russian government, which, by clever propaganda among the peasants,



spread the rumour that the Whiteruthenian nobility was going to repeal the "liberties" of the peasants given to them by the Russian government.

The rebellion dictator of Whiteruthenia, Kalinouski, was still resisting the Russian powers for a long time, but at last he was taken prisoner, and, in 1864, at Wilna he was sentenced to be hanged.

The Whiteruthenian movement, however, had not been extinguished, but was glowing like a spark and grew more and more. The Whiteruthenian intelligence was regenerated by the sons of the Whiteruthenian peasantry, who, after the abolition of serfdom, were able to attend secondary schools. Now the formation of circles and illegal associations among the young people at school begins, who are politically active, who study history and life of their own people, and publish illegal periodicals etc.

Another fighter for Whiteruthenia, a contemporary of Kalinouski, A. Hryniaviecki who murdered the Czar Alexander II., rises from these circles. Work had partly to be carried through illegally, as, after the rebellion of 1863, the Czaristic government took several measures in order to fight the Whiteruthenian movement.

Among other things in 1867, the publishing of books in Whiteruthenian language was prohibited. The Whiteruthenian books existed abroad and were smuggled into Whiteruthenia and spread there. The great interest which the scholars of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century took in Whiteruthenia, its history, its landscape etc. contributed much to the strengthening of the Whiteruthenian movement and to the stepping into prominence of the Whiteruthenian intelligent people conscious of their nationality.

Regardless of the reprisals of Czaristic government and the strong russification, which was supported by the church, the schools, the administration etc., the Whiteruthenian movement begins to develop more and more, and from the small political circles and associations there arises a movement of the whole



people. Now it very quickly seizes the masses of the people, as the young intelligents risen from these masses stand at the head of the movement. Together with the strengthening of the national feeling, the political awakening begins.

Beginning with the respect and love of the mother-tongue, the corner-stone of the re-awakening is the will of life of each people, the Whiteruthenian political movement seizes the idea of the political and national independence of Whiteruthenia and tries to realize these aims in the chaos of the revolution 1917.

### **5. Fight for Own State**

The Whiteruthenian people had already stood its first political test in the revolution of 1905, which gave the Whiteruthenian people rather a great number of national, political, and social rights.

In Whiteruthenia the revolution of 1905 put in the foreground not only the solution of social question, but also different national claims. The masses became interested in political life, and the peasantry, materially and nationally strengthened, raised its voice.

The alteration of the law of 1867, which prohibited the printing in Whiteruthenian language, was the outcome of the revolution of 1905. Whiteruthenian newspapers and periodicals are issued again, works of Whiteruthenian literature are again published in great number, Whiteruthenian parties and unions are formed again, Whiteruthenian schools are re-opened etc.

The Whiteruthenian movement becomes stronger and stronger, and it makes the masses of the people, which had become politically and nationally mature, familiar with the events, which happened in the Russia of that time, after the First World War.

In the fire of war and revolution, when all people subjected by Russia began building up their states, the Whiteruthenian people also raises its voice. In 1917 the first Whiteruthenian congress took place at Minsk, summoned by the great White-



ruthenian Council of all Whiteruthenian organizations. At this congress 1872 delegates of whole Whiteruthenia met.

On 17. Dec. 1917 the building of the municipal theatre, where the congress was meeting, was enclosed by Bolshevist troops, and the congress was dissolved by force of arms. Regardless of arrests and blows, the secretary of the congress still succeeded in reading before the congress a resolution, in which Whiteruthenia National was declared an independent republic. After the dissolution of the congress, the delegates assembled once more on Dec. 18<sup>th</sup> 1917 in the railway-depot, and authorized the committee of the congress to carry on the fight for the ideals of the Whiteruthenian independence.

At the same time when the Bolsheviks dissolved the Whiteruthenian congress by force, at Brest-Litowsk peace negotiations between Germany and Soviet Russia were taking place. The committee of the Whiteruthenian congress, which had already to work illegally, sent a delegation under the leadership of Dr. Cvikievič to this conference in order to support the Whiteruthenian interests.

But the peace-negotiations had failed: the German army continued advancing against the Bolsheviks and marched eastward. The Bolsheviks early retreated from Whiteruthenia, and on Dec. 19<sup>th</sup> 1918 the town of Minsk was already free from Bolsheviks.

The Whiteruthenian executive committee of the Whiteruthenian congress takes over the power in the town itself as well as in the district. Soon afterwards, on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1918, the committee, which in the meantime had been authorized by the congress, declared Whiteruthenia to be a Whiteruthenian National Republic.

By this action the foreign rule in Whiteruthenia was smashed and the wish of the Whiteruthenian people for an independent state was fulfilled. The government of the Whiteruthenia Republic applied to all states for being acknowledged and for diplomatic realitions being taken up. At first the Ukraine acknowledged the new Whiteruthenia. Delegations, which



were to enter into connexion with other states in the interest of Whiteruthenia and, at the same time, to ask for help in the fight for its independence, were sent to different countries.

The independence of Whiteruthenia was acknowledged by Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Czecho-Slovakia. Whiteruthenian consulates were established in these countries as well as in Germany and Denmark.

Meanwhile the Whiteruthenian military units had already had to take up arms for the existence of the young Whiteruthenian Republic. The end of this unequal fight against the Bolshevists and Poles was easily to be foreseen.

The confidence of the Whiteruthenians in the truth of Pilsudski's slogans: "for your and our liberty" was dissatisfied. After the Whiteruthenian powers had been turned to his advantage with false promises, Pilsudski did not at all think of founding an independent and autonomous Whiteruthenia, although there was always very much written and spoken about it.

During the Bolshevist-Polish war, in the place of Whiteruthenia there was founded "Middle Lithuania", as it was called, but it was soon afterwards annexed to Poland. The Whiteruthenian government enters into closer connexion with Lithuania, and on November 11<sup>th</sup> 1920 a coalition for mutual assistance is formed between the two governments.

The fight is continuing and spreads over the Whiteruthenian districts, occupied by the Bolshevists. In order to prevent the foundation of a national Whiteruthenian Republic, the Bolshevists cannot overlook the fact of a Whiteruthenian government being formed and have to pay attention to the strength of the Whiteruthenian military units and the Whiteruthenian National Movement.

In order to turn things to their favour, on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1919 they proclaimed the foundation of a Whiteruthenian Soviet Republic. In this way the whole Whiteruthenian cause is doomed to ruin. In Paris the Whiteruthenian delegation was not in accordance with the men, who had to decide upon the fate of the European peoples. Marshal Pilsudski and Prime



Minister Paderewski gave the promise of placing the administration of Whiteruthenia into the hands of eastern authorities and put in the foreground a plan of establishing at Minsk a Whiteruthenian committee, which should take over power.

But in the course of time, it became more and more evident that Whiteruthenia was going to be partitioned. In reply to these plans, at first in 1920 at Slutzk, and later on also in other districts, an armed rebellion against the Bolsheviks broke out with the aim of defending the Whiteruthenian Republic.

Having been defeated after long, bloody fights, the rebels crossed the Polish-Soviet frontier and were interned by the Poles. Part of the rebels continued the fight until the year 1934 and were at last destroyed. On March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1921, with the treaty of Riga, the first act of the national tragedy of the Whiteruthenian people had ended.

#### **6. Governed by Bolshevistic Moscow**

The Whiteruthenian national movement could not be stopped by the partition of Whiteruthenia between Poland and Soviet Russia, but it went on being active in spite of all ordeals and fights under foreign rule, partitioned among different states. For this reason the Whiteruthenian movement under Polish and Soviet rule pursued different courses.

After some changes of frontiers, in the newly formed Soviet Whiteruthenia after the last census a population of 5 millions was counted in a territory of 125.702.7 sq.km. The Whiteruthenian country, 50 to 100 km eastward, had become part of the Russian Confederate Socialist Soviet Republic.

In the first years of the revolution, when the revolutionary ideas were still very young and impetuous, and also in the following years of the Nep-System, the Whiteruthenian powers succeeded in making use of the Soviet state-system to re-establish national and cultural life of their own. Thus they were able to carry through cultural and national work within the scope of the whole. Already within a short time the Whiteruthenian cultural life was flourishing, new unwasted



productive powers rose from the re-strengthened masses, enthusiastic and ready to active collaboration, in literature young sprouts are growing, a tight net-work of thousands of elementary-, secondary-, and high-schools is spreading, scientific associations and academies are being founded, numerous writings and books are being published. During this time great progress is made in Whiteruthenian culture, science, art and literature. At that time Whiteruthenian culture was a Soviet one in form but its substance was national.

Whit the beginning of the year 1929, especially with the beginning of the Collective-System, by order of Moscow, the Communist Party changed the course of national policy and at the same time put an end to the national Nep-System. The national policy of the Bolshevists is now acting according to the slogan: "Culture must be national in form and socialistic with regard to its substance."

In order to understand fully the meaning of this culture, we refer to the same declaration as the Russian propagandists do. "All the peoples of the USSR have only one leader and master and that is comrade Stalin, but his picture can be adorned with their own national frame: all the peoples of the USSR sing Soviet songs, but the songs can be sung in their own languages."

It is clear that a policy of nationality of this kind, excluding every possibility of national development of its own, is the most terrible method of assimilating and denationalizing a people.

Beginnning in 1929 the Bolshevists are carrying through a "purification" of the Whiteruthenian people. The first blow falls on the Whiteruthenian intelligents. Thousands of Whiteruthenian scholars, authors, teachers, officials of the state, students are arrested and liquidated in the prisons of the NKWD or deported to Narym, Kolyma, Solowki or to concentrations, arrest, shootings are taking place, but the organs of the NKWD are raging in Witheruthenia. These were years of horror, in which nobody knew whether he would live to the next day.



The best sons of the Whitetruthenian people, who had sacrificed their whole might, their abilities, and their native-country, were liquidated by the Soviet "mincing-machine" as the NKWD was called there.

The groans and the cries for help of the millions of martyrs were not to be heard behind the Chinese wall of the Soviet regime. The Collective-System struck the Whiteruthenian peasantry to the core. In reality the Bolshevists established a serfdom of the state, robbing the peasants of their own tools and inventory and forcing them to work. The Whiteruthenian peasants, the love of their own soil being deeply rooted in them, clung to the old distribution of the soil and strongly resisted the introduction of Collectivism.

The best landed property of the wealthy and economically advanced peasants, the so called kulaks, was expropriated, and often also owners of estates with only 2 cows or peasants who had refused to join the colchoses were considered to be kulaks. The way of carrying through the measures against the big peasants (kulaks) is generally known, the peasants were seized just where they were found, without their caps on their heads, and were taken away.

Part of them at once perished in the NKWD, the other part was sentenced to forced labour and was employed in building different canals or was sent to concentration-camp, from which there was no escape. During the years of the formation of collectives only from Whiteruthenia about 1.000.000 of peasants were removed and taken to Kolyma, Tschukotka, Narym, Jakutsk, the Northern Ural, the White Sea canal, Workutugol, Kamtschatka, Karagand, Turkestan, and similar regions.

How millions of people died in the Soviet State is to be seen, although only partially, from the secret statistics of the Western Siberian district: in the district of Narym, up to the beginning of collective economy, 270.000 people were living, and in 1941, the last year before the war the population amounted to 500.000 persons; but during this time, viz 2.500.000 persons were entering the district of Narym. Thus



in these 10 years 2.000.000 of people disappeared without leaving any trace!

Under the conditions of constant supervision by the police, continual arrests, reprisals, examination of the social career, strict classification of the population according to paragraphs, the remaining forces, who had not been reached by the NKWD, scarcely were able to do national work. Everybody deeply hides his dissatisfaction in his heart in order to appear outwardly as Soviet-citizen.

But regardless of these dangers, illegal work in Witheruthenia was still carried on. Well known are the illegal organisation of Listopad at Shutzk, the illegal circles of students at the Whiteruthenian university at Minsk, and the national organizations of liberation at Homel and Mazyr.

The persecutions of the Whiteruthenian national intelligent people were carried through under the pretence that Witheruthenian nationaldemocratic organizations were existing. The suspicion of the NKWD went as far that even ardent adherents of Soviet power were submitted to constant controls. Thus for instance at Witebsk 188 of 191 partyorganizations were considered to be national-democratic organizations, and at Homel 109 of 143 organizations were considered to be national-democratic ones.

All really democratic circles were completely destroyed and crushed. The Witheruthenian people had worked with all its might for its further existence, struggling against the introduction of the colchosc, refusing to carry through the Soviet measures etc.

Well known Whiteruthenian activists, in their despair, knowing no way out of this distressful situation, put an end to their lives by committing suicide (Prof. Ihnatouski, President of the Whiteruthenian Academy of Science, Cerviakou, Chairman of the Council of the Commission of the People of the Whiteruthenian Socialist Soviet Republic, the well known Whiteruthenian poet Janka Kupala tried to commit suicide etc.).

Though new political controls took place again and again, the



Whiteruthenian national spirit was still being kept alive. It was already found even in the "Soviet" scholars and authors, in the artists and politicians, who had tried to put on a Soviet cloak. This again was a reason for new reprisals, political controls etc.

At last Soviet Whiteruthenia became a national cemetery, in which the tunes of the International were to be heard. The whole business life, school-instruction, theatre, cinema, meetings, agitation, press etc. were exclusively carried on in Russian language, in the language of the "Russian heroic proletariat", as the Bolshevists were saying.

In Whiteruthenia different foreigners, especially Russians, were settled, who insisted on their language being understood. In the interest of the russification of the Whiteruthenians, in 1933 a so-called "reform of orthography" was carried through, but in reality this was a measure for assimilating the Whiteruthenian grammar and language to the Russian language.

The publishing of books in Whiteruthenian language was nearly totally stopped, without few exceptions, only literature for purposes of propaganda was printed in Whiteruthenian language. The Whiteruthenian people had not only had to become enthusiastic for the Soviet leaders, but also for Russian generals and military leaders, the worship of whom was generally introduced by the Soviet power in the last years.

The Whiteruthenian people was, however, not allowed to glorify its own sons. It was not even allowed to deal with its own history, as, according to the Soviet theory, all peoples get their national culture from the Soviet power. The old school-books and literary works were strictly prohibited.

The Whiteruthenian intelligents were departed to do forced labour in the remotest districts of the Soviet Union, as it was feared they might do harm in their country.

That is in reality "the flourishing of Whiteruthenian culture", which the Whiteruthenian people owes to the Soviet power and which is generally much spoken of.



What is said here, is only to be applied generally . . .  
But accordingly those Whiteruthenians can be understood, who do not like to return to "such a native-country" and who have the courage not to love "such a government".

### 7. Under Polish Government

The fate of the Whiteruthenian people under Polish rule was different from that under Soviet power. Here the methods of physical destruction of the masses of the people were not ordered, but from the beginning the ruling Polish circles made efforts to assimilate the Whiteruthenian "minority", which, in the whole, inhabited the eastern parts of Poland.

In the Polish constitution, which had been passed in the legislative parliament (Sejm) on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 1921, all rights of the national minorities, as they were settled in the treaties of Versailles and Riga in the articles 95, 105, 108, 109, 110, 111 etc., which guarantee to all national minorities freedom of assembly, press, association, organization, conscience, religion etc., were once more repeated and confirmed.

But all this remained only written paper. In reality the Whiteruthenian people passed through according to the proverb: "If we have survived serfdom, we shall also survive the constitution". The slogans of "fraternity" and "your and our liberty" were soon replaced by different forms of national oppression. Therefore it is not to be wondered that the Whiteruthenian people should very soon take up the fight for its national interests. Attempts of rebellions are made, of which, only in 1922, according to an official declaration of Prime Minister Grabski, 878 were counted in the Western Whiteruthenia and in Ukraine. Well known is the trial at Belostok against Whiteruthenian nationalists (the trial of the 45 with Vera Maslouskaja at the head), who had been accused of having prepared an armed rebellion against Poland.

The endeavours of the Whiteruthenian people of forming its own national life and of defending its rights, became evident in the elections for the Polish Parliament. At the elections of



1922 the Whiteruthenians, in spite of the acts of violence of the police, elected 11 representatives for the Seim and 3 for the Senate.

But the waves soon softened down, as the Polish government carried through an intensive policy of assimilation in the Whiteruthenian districts. Hundreds of Whiteruthenian elementary- and secondary schools were closed. The "law of language" issued by the government Grabski in 1924, reduced the possibility of opening Whiteruthenian schools very much. Where the peasants demanded to have their schools, measures are taken by the police.

The law of 1925 concerning the land-reform gave the required possibilities for Polish colonisation, as the Whiteruthenian element could be excluded from the bestowal of landed property.

The polonization was strongly supported by the church, the school, the press etc. As a matter of course under these circumstances the Whiteruthenian-Polish relations could not be very friendly.

Under the impression that Whiteruthenian culture was furthered in Soviet Whiteruthenian, the sympathies of the Whiteruthenians in Western Whiteruthenia were also directed to Soviet Whiteruthenian. Already in 1925 the Whiteruthenian organization of the people, the so-called "Belaruskaja Hramada", which had been founded by the Whiteruthenian-parliament-club, begins growing strongly. This organization derived its traditions from the first Whiteruthenian party, which was founded in 1902 and had the same name.

Up to the beginning of 1927 it amounted to more than 100.000 members and had spread over the whole of Western Whiteruthenia. Having a distinct political programme, it had become a danger for the Polish government, as, in the interest of the Whiteruthenian population, it could address its claims to the government.

In 1926, after Pilsudski had seized power, a strong persecution of the Whiteruthenians in the Polish State began. Where as



still in 1928 13 Whiteruthenian delegates were sitting in the Polish Parliament, now there were none left at all. The press, organisations and schools of their own were prohibited, even the Whiteruthenian young peasants had been forbidden to assemble in their villages and to sing their own folk-songs. The Polish government fulfilled neither a claim nor a wish of the Whiteruthenian members of parliament and the Whiteruthenian organisations addressed to the Polish government authorities and to the League of Nations were answered. The Polish politicians had only one reply to these claims and protests: "The Whiteruthenian movement is Bolshevist work directed against the State".

But nevertheless the democratic statesystem in Poland, with the exception of its application to the problem of nationality, at least gave the possibility of maintaining the Whiteruthenian national potential more than in the Soviet part of Whiteruthenia. Here more national powers were preserved than in Soviet Whiteruthenia, as everything was carried through slower and in a smaller degree.

Here the denationalization of Whiteruthenia, as everything was carried through so radically, moreover the foundation of national life was deeply rooted and the national decay was not yet advanced so far, though Polish chauvinist circles were pretending that after 20 years it would not be possible to find any Whiteruthenian even with a candle.

## **8. The Begin of the Second World War and the Bolsheviks' Occupation of Western Whiteruthenia**

This was the state of the Whiteruthenian movement at the beginning of the Second World War.

When, in the morning of September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1939, the first bombs had fallen, the whole Whiteruthenian people expected a change of its situation.

All were convinced that the German army would not stop in Poland, but march on to the East, that an independent Whiteruthenia would come into existence, and that, at last,



the new master would not be worse than the old one, and that the change of government would give the Whiteruthenians the possibility of strengthening in the interior and of preparing for the next development of events.

At that time the fight in the West was still a secondary fact. But the result of the Polish-German war was that the whole of Western Whiteruthenia was ceded by Germany to Soviet Russia.

Now, when there was no enemy to fight against, the Soviet troops delivered a "heroic fight" against all "White Poles" and "victoriously" occupied Western Whiteruthenia with the noble aim of "liberating the closely related brothers of Western Whiteruthenia and the Ukraine".

In order to corroborate this — in reality they had only got this district from Hitler as compensation for supplying grain and petrol — the Bolshevists, with their characteristic cleverness, carried through elections for the so-called national assembly, which was convoked at Belostok in September, 1939. As representatives in this national assembly the most uneducated and least developed men were elected in order to have "their men" in the assembly. In most cases the candidates were not proposed by the people itself, but appointed by the Bolshevists, the whole election, however, was to appear to be a free election.

Owing to these machinations, the national assembly of course had become the spokesman of the communist Party. Those delegates, who had dared to utter their opinions in the meetings, were after the meeting "asked" to call upon the NKWD, and they were never heard of again.

A vote resulted in 99% for the joining of Western Whiteruthenia to Soviet Russia, which is well to be understood, as under the prevailing circumstances all Whiteruthenians considered a union of the whole of Whiteruthenia to be the right solution. But the result of the vote was brought about in such a manner that one was led to the conclusion that even the Poles had voted for the joining to Soviet Whiteruthenia! —



In order to please the Lithuanian people and thus to create a basis for the occupation of Lithuania, which was to be carried through with German assistance, still before the vote the Poles ceded the town of Wilna with the adjoining district to Lithuania.

Independent from the "liberation" the old Polish-Soviet frontier was still existing. When crossing this frontier all travellers were strictly controlled by the NKWD. This control enabled the Bolshevists to tell the masses about the success of the Communists in establishing a new Communist social order.

At the same time members of the Russian army, officials of State and Party, were flocking into the country, pillaged the still existing stores, and took all goods, watches etc. with them. A fierce agitation was setting in, in which especially the German aggression against Poland was put in the foreground.

In other respects the Bolshevists did not sleep either: arrests, deportations were beginning, preparatory work for trials of people against leading Whiteruthenian activists was stated. During this short time, according to official statements, 1.800.000 people were deported from Western Whiteruthenia and the Western Ukraine.

As they were citizens of the former Polish Republic, the foreign press considered them to be Poles. It is true that a great number of Poles from Western Whiteruthenia, especially from the frontier-districts — first of all Polish officers — were deported, but not less these deportations also struck the Whiteruthenians. It may be said, indeed, that the greater part of the persons deported from Whiteruthenia were Whiteruthenians.

After the first collaboration with the Whiteruthenians, i. e. the introduction of the Whiteruthenian language in the schools, declarations of liberty etc., the Bolshevists practized the same methods here, which they had already tested in the Soviet zone.



Very soon the population had to become acquainted with the Soviet reality, which is gray, obscure, and full of alarm and horror. They saw the famous leaders of the colchoses from Soviet Whiteruthenia in patched jackets with buttons of wood and in bast-shoes; they got aware of the Bolsheviks' life of cultural and opulent life of the Soviet-citizens, they saw the lack of civilization of the Soviet new-comers, who mostly had no relations to the native population, as they had come from the most different parts of the Soviet Union, and only very seldom from Whiteruthenia. The russification of the branches of administration and the whole machinery of the State was beginning.

The newly established offices for the introduction of the colchoses, the Stachanow-movement, the Socialist coordination, the worship of the leaders etc. were joined to the existing administration. All this was so foreign and artificial.

The cross-bars of the windows, stones and wood were removed from the destroyed buildings of the big peasants and land owners, were taken to other places, or at the same place a new building was constructed of these materials as symbol of the Socialist re-construction; a factory-building re-painted in another colour and connected with a new administration was changed into a kombinat, which was written of in the press and spoken of at meetings as being the proof of the improving and development of Bolshevik architecture. The workers were forced to take part in official processions, they had to tell lies to themselves, to elect an honorary presidency etc.

In the meantime the tight net-work of air-fields, the concentration of troops, the ARP-training taking place almost uninterruptedly, the panic among the population, and the rumours of the march on Warsaw, reassured the liberated citizens, who were waiting for the further development of events.

The clouds of war were gathering, and finally on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1941 they broke suddenly.



### 9. Being Pressed by Hitler's Germany (1941—44)

Under the hard pressure of the German troops, within a short time, the whole of Whiteruthenia passed under German rule. The population of the country greeted the expulsion of the Bolsheviks with enthusiasm, in the opinion that there was no greater evil than the Bolsheviks rule.

The Germans removed the foundations of the Bolshevik rule so very much hated by the whole population. Nobody could foresee what the new order would be. At first everybody noticed the relief of the old master and now believed that the new master would not at all be worse than the old one. Above all the Whiteruthenians in former Soviet Whiteruthenia considered the German intervention to be only the liberation of the colchese, of Bolshevik terrorism, and of spiritual slavery.

The Whiteruthenians in former Western Whiteruthenia, who, after the treaty of Riga, were living in the districts of the former Polish State, were able, after the rapid "voluntary union of the population of Western Whiteruthenia and the Western Ukraine with the great Soviet Union" to experience the "blessings" of this union personally. Nearly all Whiteruthenian intelligents, though now living under the "sun of Stalin's constitution ("the most democratic one of the whole world"), were condemned to total deportation and extermination.

About 1.800.000 people were taken away from the western "liberated" districts, among them a great number of Whiteruthenians. Therefore the Bolshevik proverb: "We held out our hands to you in brotherly help, you will give us your legs yourselves". Thus it is no wonder, that they all welcomed the retreat of the Bolshevik "proclaimers of freedom".

The Whiteruthenian intelligents as well as the whole people now hoped to be able to start national-political work on a broad basis. First of all there was the cultivation of the fields in Eastern Whiteruthenia, impoverished by the Bolsheviks during the long years of their rule.



But now the main task was: to seize every opportunity for political cultural, and national work in order to approach the final aim of founding an independent Whiteruthenia. Whatever the Germans might intent, which aims they might pursue, our task was: to re-build Whiteruthenia and to cultivate its abandoned fields.

As the fighters for the Whiteruthenian cause had been able to find forms for national and cultural work under the most difficult conditions of the Bolshevist rule and the national oppression by the Poles, now, in this period of disorder and chaos, it was possible to carry on this work without any difficulties. Now it was important to gain as much influence as possible and to establish a basis for further activity.

But it was not yet possible to survey the situation completely. The ground was still shivering by the explosions and hits of shells. There was only a feeble gleam of hope. The first Whiteruthenian emigrants returned from Germany and Poland, hoping that, at this exciting moment of national rising,, they might be useful to their country.

The Whiteruthenian people was in the situation of a slave, who was suddenly liberated from his fetters. It completely gave itself up to joy and it felt new strength. One did not yet think of what there would happen in the future.

At that time the examples of Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, and other countries could not yet be compared to Whiteruthenia, as in their opinion these countries were occupied only during the war, whilst the Whiteruthenians had no state of their own like Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia. These lost everything, whilst the Whiteruthenians could lose by the war nothing but their fetters; they also had wanted to make use of the war on their way to their political independence.

Nobody could yet foresee how things would develop. But the sound political view was already formed that Germany and the Soviet-Union would exhaust their powers in this war and there would arise the possibility of a national and social revolution of all peoples enslaved by the Bolshevists, as well as



the reform of the social-political structure of the former Soviet colossus by the inherent powers of the different peoples.

The whole work of the Whiteruthenian national powers was based on these thoughts. Now it was of importance to become strong, to interest the masses of the people in active collaboration in order not to make the same mistakes as in the past, and successfully to support the fight for independence.

The whole work of the Whiteruthenian intelligents had this aim. Before the Germans perceived it, the new national movement was already strengthened and the waves rose higher and higher. The efforts of the intelligents were fully supported by the masses. We need no Bolsheviks! We need no Poles! Down with the colchoses! We are the masters in our country! This spontaneous rising of the masses of the people was the most favourable fostering-soil for the national-political work of the Whiteruthenian activists.

The people took over the full powers, Whiteruthenian committees were founded, the basis for a social order was created, and the remainders of dark past times were removed. However, a military government was existing, but it was very much occupied with military affairs and did not much care for policy. The first proclamations of the military government had been issued in Whiteruthenian and German languages, which had seemed to indicate that the Germans wanted to deal with the Whiteruthenian problem.

But all was only an illusion. The Germans quickly got aware of their mistakes: The Whiteruthenian movement would only serve as a barke to their colonial-piratical policy.

The first blow struck the national Whiteruthenian forces.

All that the Whiteruthenians had taken in their hands was again taken from them and handed over to the German "brown" administration, which had followed the army. Shootings, arrests, and the destruction of the Whiteruthenian national organizations took place. Chauvinistic Poles and Russians, who had observed the growth of the Whiteruthenian movement only with reluctance, came to help the Germans.



The Germans, true to their motto "divide et impera", liked to make use of these elements hostile to the Whiteruthenians and employed them as officials in the administration, interpreters in the army, Gestapo, and auxiliary police, as clerks (men and women) etc.

These strangers in the Whiteruthenian country formed committees, declared themselves to be strong opponents of Bolshevism, and tried to ingratiate themselves with the Germans, handing over hundreds and thousands of active Whiteruthenians to the German robbers as alleged adherents of Communism.

The Germans pretended to be innocent and tried to throw the whole blame on the Poles and the Polish provocators. On the other hand the aims of the German imperialists became more and more evident, viz. to take possession of Whiteruthenia.

Now the Whiteruthenians saw that the Germans, inseated of the Bolsheviks yoke, introduced slave-work for Germany, to which they would be hopelessly condemned in case of a German victory. There was the prospect for the Whiteruthenians of doing slave-work for German disabled soldiers or officials, who were to get the Whiteruthenian land in the form of "Knight's Manors".

The intelligent people understood that earlier or later they would come into collision with the German imperialist interests and that this conflict would be of decisive influence on the whole existence of the Whiteruthenian people. It became quite evident to them that the Germans had not at all the intention of creating an independent Whiteruthenia, they pretended never to have heard of the existence of a Whiteruthenian people and now for the first time to have come into contact with the Whiteruthenian problem! All that the German Supreme Command had known about Whiteruthenia in the First World War was forgotten by the Nazis.

Suddenly the partition of their country became a fact for the Whiteruthenian people: the district of Wilna was annexed to the Kommissariat of Lithuania, the area of Belostok formed a



special district and was annexed to East Prussia, getting a Prussian administration, the districts of Brest, Kobryn, Pinsk, and Homel were annexed to the so-called Reichskommissariat of Ukraine.

These events forced the Whiteruthenians to draw up another plan for their work. There were no longer any illusions that the Germans would allow the Whiteruthenians the foundation of a national state. But on the other hand it now became clear that the Germans would lose the war and that at last those would be victorious who would bring real liberty to the peoples.

But for the time being the political conditions were so confused that the Whiteruthenian political leaders did not see any way out of this situation. Democracy was allied with Bolshevism. If this coalition should be victorious, that would mean the re-instatement of the Bolshevist rule and at the same time the national ruin of the Whiteruthenian people.

Thus the belief grew more and more that the alliance between Democracy and Bolshevism was formed for strategic purposes, that the political wisdom of England and America would get the upper hand at last, and that these States would succeed in separating from this "ally", which in the future would be a danger to all democratic States and would take up arms against them.

It became more and more evident that after the overthrow of German Fascism, that the idea of the freedom of the peoples and the individual would win the victory, and that at last the historical truth about the Whiteruthenian people would be generally known.

Now the work of the Whiteruthenian intelligents has two aims: firstly the fight against the Germans and Bolshevists in order to undermine the force of both of them, and secondly, the legal work for the purpose of protecting the Whiteruthenian forces from physical ruin and of preventing the Polish, Russian, and Whiteruthenian hostile elements in the German administration from performing provocative acts against the



Whiteruthenian people.

A great number of Whiteruthenians, intimidated by shootings, hid in the woods. The first new Whiteruthenian organization under the name of "Whiteruthenian People's Front", founded by the activist Godlewski, shot later on by the Germans, begins its activity. This organization spread far and comprised nearly all Whiteruthenian activists.

The "Whiteruthenian Niezaleznickaja Party" also begins its work it issues pamphlets and proclamations, forms units of partisans, and from 1943 onwards a paper of its own "Bjuleten" (informations) is issued. This paper worked for the political independence of Whiteruthenia, and it considered the armed fight against the Germans, Bolsheviks, and other powers of occupation as a means to create an independent Whiteruthenia.

The "Whiteruthenian Nesaleschnizkaja Party" also took up the fight against those Whiteruthenians, who were working for Germany and were trying to give the work of the Whiteruthenian organizations a turn favourable for Germany. At the head of this group of Whiteruthenian collaborators was the activist Fabian Akintschyc, still well known from the time of the movement of "Gromada" in Poland.

During the German-Polish War this one went by aeroplane to Gdansk, where a meeting with representatives of the German government was to take place. In the course of time he succeeded in getting a number of collaborators whom he later on sent to Whiteruthenia for doing political work in this way. He had temporarily succeeded in seizing the leadership of the union of the Whiteruthenian youth, which he attempted to build up after the fashion of the German Hitler-Youth, but in its heart this union truly clung to the national Whiteruthenian ideas. Fabian Akintschyc was sentenced to death by the Whiteruthenian Niezalezwickaja Party and was shot in 1943 at Minsk.

Besides the illegal work, work is also eagerly carried on in public under different political pretences, so as to give the



Germans no reason to persecute its originators. The chief aim was national cultural work in order to create a body of active fighters, to enlighten the masses, and to strengthen their feeling of nationality.

But soon the situation became very difficult as the woods were occupied by Bolsheviks, who continually got help by means of aeroplanes and also exceeded the Whiteruthenian partisans in numbers, for they were also joined by greater units of the regular Bolshevik army fighting in the near of the Germans. These Bolshevik partisans chiefly fought against the Whiteruthenian peasants, murdered and plundered them, burnt the villages etc.

In the meantime the Whiteruthenians had to carry on an unequal fight against the Germans and the Bolsheviks. They had to procure their arm themselves, which they could buy now and then from the Germans for some bacon, but for this reason they had often to join Bolshevik units temporarily.

Within a short time the whole of Whiteruthenia was flooded with partisans. All those, who were discontented or wanted to fight, as well as those, who feared to be shot or to be forcibly deported to work in Germany, fled into the woods. Now the Germans took radical measures hoping that thus they could put an end to the activity of the partisans. They burnt the villages where partisans were active and shot all the male inhabitants. One single report was sufficient to cause the destruction of a whole village and its inhabitants. The peasants were often dug in alive or torn by policedogs.

These brutal acts were not only committed in order to fight the partisans, but, under the pretence of fighting them, systematically to exterminate the population in the Whiteruthenian districts for the purpose of making these districts fit for German colonization. But this action had only the contrary result: Still more the population fled into the woods. Panic fear was prevailing among the population. When German units were approaching, the male population fled and hid themselves.



The Whiteruthenian intelligents protested most violently against these brutalities, proving the illogicality of their actions to the Germans and protecting the peace-loving population.

Prof. Dr. Ing. Iwanouski, mayor of the town of Minsk, spoke in especially sharp terms against these brutalities at the meeting of the Gebietskommissare on August 15<sup>th</sup> 1943.

Now the Germans changed their tactics. Firstly they issued an amnesty for all partisans putting down their arms, and secondly they appealed to the population to take up the fight against the partisans; they sent to the villages small armed units, which were to protect the population against all aggressions in collaboration with armed Whiteruthenian units.

The Whiteruthenians at once seized the opportunity of forming armed units though being dependent on the Germans. In each unit there was a Whiteruthenian national nucleus, which had the task of forming national fighting groups in order to take up arms at the right moment against everyone that would stand in the way of a free independent Whiteruthenia. The first task of these units was to protect the Whiteruthenian peasant from Bolshevist and German arbitrariness, at last to create favourable conditions for national cultural work in the villages, and the second task was to weaken the Bolshevist powers and thus to strengthen the national partisans, with whom they were in close connexion.

At many places a so-called "Whiteruthenian home-guard", which later on was to form the nucleus of the Whiteruthenian military units, was formed among the population, but the Germans were ruling and did not want to hand over arms to the home-guard. Thereupon the home-guard armed itself alone. All these endeavours had only one aim, the formation of a disciplined cadre, which, at the right moment, could be the frame of a Whiteruthenian army.

When the Germans noticed the general dissatisfaction, the reasons of which were known to everybody, they were forced to give in in some points. This compliance was also due to



the events at the front growing worse.

The "Blitzkrieg" which the Germans at first had spoken of, was lingering on. At the same, the situation of the Whiteruthenians grew better. "The worse matters are at the front, the better we are doing", that was the formula, which was used whenever there was a new compliance of the Germans. In the district Belostok, the Germans, after having often been applied to, even allowed Whiteruthenian schools to be opened. At last, after the compliance of the Germans, there was the following situation:

1. The Whiteruthenian language is officially admitted besides the German language,
2. A certain administration of the districts is admitted,
3. A Whiteruthenian court is admitted for normal affairs,
4. An association of the Whiteruthenian youth is admitted,
5. Whiteruthenian schools, but only elementary schools are admitted,
6. Nearly in all towns Whiteruthenian newspapers are published,
7. In the meeting at Minsk the Whiteruthenian Orthodox clergy as well as the church-administration declared the Whiteruthenian churches to be independent.

This compliance of the Germans, which, without any doubt, strengthened national life, also increased the attention of the people. They all knew these "blessings" to be temporally to get into touch again with the masses of the people and to strengthen their own positions.

But these "benefits" of the Germans were restricted only to cultural life, education, social and sanitary institutions. The administration went on depending on the German Gebietskommissare for important matters the consent of the higher authorities, the so called "Generalkommissariat Whiteruthenia", had to be given.

It was a further task to make political claims and to put the Germans before the fact of a strong Whiteruthenian people's movement, to which they had to pay attention. In different



cases the question of a re-union of the Whiteruthenian countries was raised.

Thus, also at the meeting of the leaders of the Whiteruthenian homeguard on 21. 8. 1943 at the town of Minsk, the re-union of the Whiteruthenian countries was claimed, by which the German administration was alarmed. The originators of this claim, who had acted in conformance with the decision of the illegal organizations, had hidden order to escape the expected reprisals.

Preparatory work for re-union of the Whiteruthenian countries was done in those parts of Whiteruthenia, which did not belong to the Generalkommissariat. The German still resisted in spite of their setbacks at the front. Their "compliance" was restricted only to the small district of the "Generalkommissariat of Whiteruthenia" forming together with the Baltic countries part of the so-called "East-Land".

In the Whiteruthenian countries beyond the Commissariat an eager anti-Whiteruthenian policy was carried on by the military authorities. In order to weaken the Whiteruthenians, they made use of the Russians and other minorities, fleeing from the advancing Bolsheviks.

The Whiteruthenian press was prohibited, school-instruction was given only in Russian language etc. These methods of stirring up the national minorities against the masses of the population could be noticed in the most different parts of Whiteruthenia. The aim of this policy was evident.

In 1943 the German, pursuant to their cowardly policy of compliance, allowed a Whiteruthenian Central Council to be formed. Prof. Radoslau Astrouski, took over the leadership of the Council. This Whiteruthenian Central Council now took over the management of the schools, cultural work, the departments.

#### **10. The Repeated Bolsheviks Occupation of Whiteruthenia.**

The total breakdown of the German East front being imminent, the Central Council decided to form Whiteruthenian military units in a larger scale than it had been the case till now.



Under the pretence of fighting the partisans a general mobilization of this mobilization, which had not been expected by the Germans, showed them that in the country there existed an authority upon the call of which the whole people rises! In spite of the active resistance of all Bolshevist partisans the mobilization was carried through in best order.

But the Germans feared that hostile actions might happen and, in spite of the given promises, hesitated to hand over arms. The battalions were idly sitting in the barracks, and at last they took the initiative of arming themselves.

Events took their course, but unfortunately not in the direction that had been hoped for. The Bolshevist army was very strong and the weak Whiteruthenian forces could scarcely offer resistance. The battalions retreated, but in most cases they remained where they just were, in order to carry on the fight against the Bolsheviks as partisans. They joined the rear of the Bolsheviks. Still before the Soviet offensive in Whiteruthenia the second Whiteruthenian congress was summoned by the Whiteruthenian Central Council to meet at Minsk. The Congress met on July 27<sup>th</sup>, when the booming of the artillery-fire at the front could already be heard.

At this tragic moment, when Whiteruthenia was going again to be flooded by the Bolshevist waves, the delegates of the congress once more loudly declared before the whole world that the Whiteruthenian people wanted to live independently in its country. In spite of the warnings of the Germans and against the German wishes, it was once more stated that the Whiteruthenian people was standing on the platform of political independence as had been proclaimed by the first general Whiteruthenian congress in 1918.

The congress declared unanimously that the Whiteruthenian people would never acknowledge the form of the Soviet Socialist Republic forced upon. Moreover the congress decided to inform the peoples of the world that the voice of the USSR in Whiteruthenian affairs was of no importance and would never be, and that all treaties that would be concluded with the USSR,



Poland, and other states, as far as they would deal with Whiteruthenian affairs, would not be valid.

Whiteruthenia was threatened by an immense conflagration. The stream of refugees striving to save themselves from Bolshevist destruction moved westward. Day and night the peasants' carriages were rolling along the roads, hundreds and thousands of people were taken by train far away from their native homes. Everywhere groans were to be heard and the tombs increased. But the greater part of the active fighters remained at their places to carry on the fight for Whiteruthenian liberty. Many Whiteruthenian fled westward hoping to find refuge and to be protected by the Allied Forces, whose victory was quite evident now.

The Whiteruthenians being in Germany, who were controlled by the police lying in the agonies of death, tried to unite as a national family, waiting for the coming events. The still existing Whiteruthenian forces were hostile to the Germans. The officers corps, closely connected with the Whiteruthenian Nesaleschnizkaja Party, knew quite well what to do and against whom to direct their arms. Partly these units marched back to Whiteruthenia, forcing their way through Poland by their arms, in order to join the existing Whiteruthenian armies of partisans and to fight with them.

The Whiteruthenian division had refused to go to the west front. Now, being near the front, it tried to come into connexion with the staff of the Third American Army and attacked the Germans in the rear. Finally the Hitler-system of terror and fear had broken down.

Now a new period of national political life began for the Whiteruthenians, under the conditions of an alliance between Democracy and the USSR, trying to give the world a real peace which was to give liberty to all peoples and individuals.

Thus the second chapter of the tragedy of the Whiteruthenian people ended. After the Second World War the Whiteruthenian people also did not attain the realization of its ideal of political liberty, for which its sons had fought and died. Now the heroic



fight is being continued in the hope for a better future. The people believes firmly that, if once there were powers in the world, which, in the name of justice and liberty, fought a mortal combat against the terror and the cruelties of a Hitler, these powers will not refrain either from fighting against the conspiracy of every other tyrant.

The Whiteruthenian people will find its place in the great family of nations, and it will fight for this better future till the end. Never will it acknowledge those adventurers, who are now appearing in its name, to be its speakers and representatives.

The Whiteruthenian emigrants were scattered everywhere at the end of the war. By unfavourable circumstances a union of these scattered forces has not been possible. The legal position of the Whiteruthenians in occupied Germany is more than confused also at the present time. The Whiteruthenian Soviet Socialist Republic is acknowledged.

The Whiteruthenians from Eastern Whiteruthenia were forcibly transported to their native country, thus being at the mercy of Bolshevism. Those Whiteruthenians who possessed the Polish citizenship, in most cases, were accommodated in Polish camps, thus not only being unable to report, but also being unable to occupy nationality mixed up with the notion of citizenship. But the powers of the Whiteruthenians are existing, and at the first opportunity they will also quickly find a way to unite.